

Regional Geospatial Resource Center Proposal – Southwest Idaho

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Background

Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) are identified in the Idaho Spatial Data Infrastructure (ISDI) Strategic Plan as a key component for fostering coordination and delivering shared services throughout the state. According to the strategic plan, RRCs “encourage local and regional participation and provide help and support to users around the state.” Additional roles for RRCs identified in the strategic plan include providing technical support, training, professional networking, and assisting the IGO in managing the SDI.

In the Business Plan for ISDI, RRCs are further defined as “These centers act as points of coalescence for GIS user organizations in different areas of the state and help to connect local activities with the statewide SDI program. They will be supported by existing institutions or groups (e.g., universities, existing regional GIS user groups) that have GIS resources sufficient to provide some support to users. These regional centers would be managed in coordination with the Idaho Geospatial Office (IGO). Depending on regional needs, they could provide a number of services and support functions, such as: a) answering technical questions for users, b) providing some general "consulting" support and advisory services for organizations in the process of GIS development, c) training sessions, d) site for meetings and special SDI events, and e) aggregate and serve regional Framework data.”

RRCs are a hybrid entity. There are aligned with the State by being chartered through the IGO, and purposed to support ISDI efforts. It is anticipated that a part of the funding to support RRCS will come from the IGO budget. At the same time, the RRCs function to support and enhance local and regional GIS operations, are staffed by local and regional personnel, and it is anticipated that some, possibly all, of the funding will come from regional sources and /or efforts (eg grants). By being aligned with the State, the RRCs can provide longevity within the region and consistency between the regions.

This proposal is meant to be conceptual in nature. The purpose of this proposal is to:

- Formally announce to the IGO and the GIS community the intention to develop an RRC for the SW Idaho region
- Serve as a focal point for all parties interested in an RRC

The details of planning and implementing an RRC have been purposefully left to be defined at a later date. Once the IGO approves this proposal, a plan will need to be developed that spells out the details related to funding, relationships with existing organizations and groups, etc.

Regional Resource Center Scope and purpose

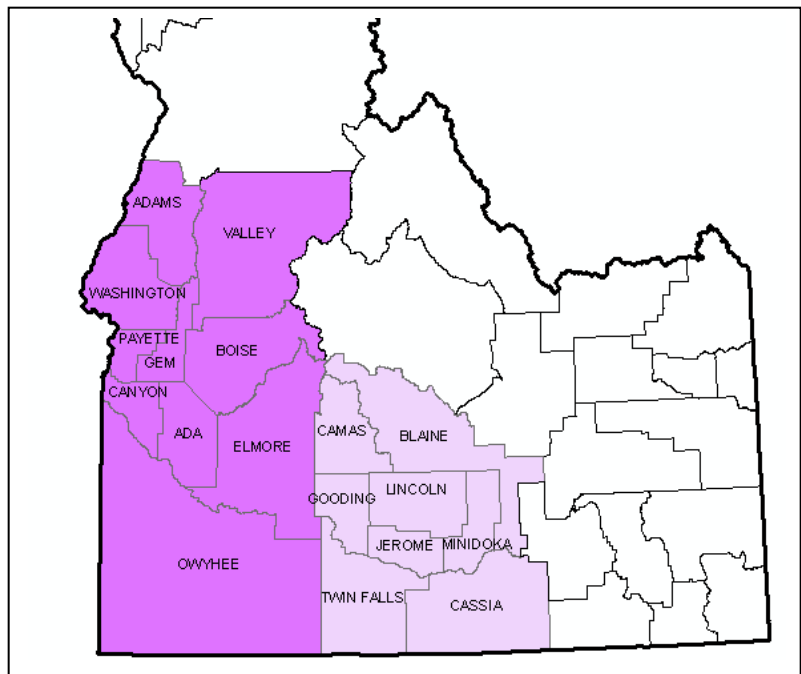
The use of GIS has been evolving in Southwest Idaho over the last 20 years. Creation and maintenance of a GIS is an expensive and laborious endeavor; consequently the implementation of GIS, and the maturity of the implementations, is variable throughout the region. A Regional Resource Center (RRC) would serve as a region-wide focal point for GIS efforts to provide structure and cohesion and consequently promote commerce, enhance government, and create more opportunities for education. An RRC would embed the objectives of Idaho Spatial Data Infrastructure (ISDI) in Southwest Idaho, and support state efforts from the grassroots up. An RRC in Southwest Idaho would operate under the following objectives:

1. Support and promote geographic information systems
2. Support and promote ISDI activities
3. Facilitate GIS education and training
4. Enhance professional networking and collaboration
5. Promote standards related to data quality and accessibility
6. Provide technical support
7. Recommend, promote, and maintain efficiency solutions related to:
 - a. Professionals with specific skills and knowledge
 - b. Software and hardware
 - c. Overhead
 - d. Existing data
8. Promote data publication and dissemination

Geographic Area Served / Represented

We propose a regional resource center be established in Southwest Idaho as shown in the map below.

The area that the SW Idaho RRC will serve is composed of two areas: 1) a core area of the ten counties in District 3 of the Idaho Association of Counties (<http://www.idcounties.org>) and 2) an extended area covering all or part of IAC District 4. The core area will continue to be served by the SW Idaho RRC long-term, while the extended area will be served by the SW Idaho RRC until that area or parts thereof either form a separate RRC, choose to decline services from the SW Idaho RRC, or opt to make the relationship with the SW Idaho RRC permanent. The geographic region proposed for the SW Idaho RRC conforms to the regions defined in the North and Eastern Idaho RRC proposals. The geographic extent of the region is based on economic and transportation factors, other relevant regional delineations, and on a history of collaboration and affiliations (for example, the SW Idaho GIS Users group (aka SWIG)) within the core and extended areas.



Participants and Organizations

Potential participants exist in three categories:

1. *Government:* The counties defined in this proposal, the respective cities, and other local governmental agencies, quasi-governmental agencies (such as local highway districts and Metropolitan Planning Organizations), and tribes would set the direction for the RRC. Participation from State and Federal regional agencies, including but not limited to the Idaho

BHS, Dept of Lands, DEQ, BLM, BOR, USGS, and the US Forest Service would strengthen the effort.

2. *Academia:* Boise State University, Northwest Nazarene University, College of Idaho, College of Western Idaho, CSI, the State of Idaho primary and secondary education system, and extension services of ISU and UI within the RRC boundary comprise the academic infrastructure.
3. *Private Sector:* This category could include but is not limited to development agencies; utility companies such as Idaho Power, United Water, and Intermountain Gas; and could also include natural resource, for-profit, and non-profit companies.

It is also possible that individuals from the general public, and not affiliated with the above mentioned entities, could be involved.

Note that the exact nature of the relationship of the RRC with existing organizations and groups, such as the SW Idaho GIS Users Group (SWIG) will be determined either in the implementation plan or worked out over time. We do not expect the RRC to replace existing GIS-related groups or organizations, but instead to strive to find opportunities to partner with existing groups where such partnerships support the RRC and the objectives listed above.

Proposed Physical Location

There is no initial need for a physical location; administration of the SW Idaho RRC would initially utilize resources from participating entities. To begin, we envision a web-based venue for communication that utilizes existing hardware and software at participating entities (Sage Community Resources and ACHD are possibilities). Based on historical precedent, many of the other activities could occur at locations throughout the region. For example, training events and meetings could be held at BSU or local government offices. As the RRC matures, an independent location could be acquired, if needed, for the purpose of administration and carrying out the objectives outlined in this proposal but this is too futuristic to consider at this time.

Services and Resources

- Grant administration for regional funding opportunities
- Representation responsibilities on relevant statewide committees
- Provide a regional forum for discussion, collaboration, and training
- Facilitate implementation and monitor maintenance of regional ISDI and geospatial programs and products by providing technical support for data/metadata creation and maintenance
- Provide data discovery, use, and dissemination by leveraging the power of geospatial web services

Local Champions

Southwest Idaho is rich with organizations that possess GIS experience and infrastructure. Such organizations include Boise State University, Southwest Idaho GIS Users Group (SWIG), Idaho State GIO, COMPASS, Sage Community Resources, and a large and active group of local government agencies. These groups provide a strong framework and diverse expertise for championing a regional geospatial resource center.

Funding

Initially, no additional funding will be needed as we will leverage resources that are already in place. However, with an eye to the future, a stable funding model will need to be developed as the RRC matures. We expect to utilize multiple sources of funding, including but not limited to grants, in-kind matches, and donations. Some funding to the RRC may come through the IGO; this will be a discussion item when the future comes more in focus.

Summary

The vision of a SW Idaho Regional GIS Resource Center dovetails perfectly with the concepts, mechanisms, and direction outlined in the Idaho SDI strategic and business plans. It builds on the foundation of existing resources and recognizes that coordination must improve and expand, but also be flexible based on the issues that face the region's diverse entities that have many needs for framework datasets, geospatial analysis tools, and expertise.

We believe the proposed model that builds on existing resources is one that elected officials at all levels of government can understand and support.